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VICTORIA
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Originally produced at the Strand Theatre, Toronto, March 29 and 30, 1935 under the auspices of the Morris Club.

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ALL THE INCIDENTS AND CHARACTERS OF THIS PLAY ARE WHOLLY IMAGINARY.

Characters

(In order of appearance)

SIR JOHN WESLEY HORN

DAWSON, *his butler*

MR. LOMER HOGG

HON. JOSEPH CRUST

MR. JARVIS

RT. HON. HECTOR DICKTORSON, *Prime Minister and leader of Loyalist Party*

MISS MINNIE WILTON

MR. JOHN WEST, *Secretary, Bricklayers' Union*

MRS. ABBIE MARTIN, *President, United Farm Women*

PROF. LORNE JENKINS

MRS. GILBERT ANDREWS, *President, National Women's Labour League*

DR. EBER MUIR

MR. ROBERT MCGREGOR, *leader of the Socialist Party*

MR. BILL HIGGINS

President of the "Ladies of the Churches" Sewing Circle

Secretary of the "Ladies of the Churches" Sewing Circle

MISS GREEN
MRS. THOMAS
MRS. FERRIS
MRS. ORMOND
MRS. DOUGHTY
} *Members of the Sewing Circle*

Miss Washburn and other young Socialist workers, men and girls

Newsboy

Older members of the Socialist party

The Brains We Trust

ACT I.

SCENE 1.

TIME, AUGUST, 193—.

A room in the private home of Sir John Wesley Horn of Montreal. The room is rather small and furnished with an eye to strict utility. A door to the left is the only entrance. At the opposite end of the room there is a fireplace, from the sides of which to the walls are rows of shelves filled with books. The only window, consisting of numerous panes of coloured glass, stretches along the top of the back wall, almost the whole length of the room. A portrait of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and one of Sir John A. Macdonald hang on the back wall beneath the window. There is an easy chair at each side of the fireplace; an oblong table with half a dozen chairs surrounding it stands across the centre of the floor while behind the table and close to the back wall is a comfortable lounge. A radio stands in the corner to the right of the entrance.

Sir John is seated at the far end of the table. He is an elderly man, a lawyer by training; of medium stature, slight but wiry and agile. His forehead is high and intellectual and he gives the impression of being cautious and philosophical. Sir John rings.

ENTER THE BUTLER.

SIR JOHN. Oh, Dawson, I'm expecting some gentlemen to see me. Senator Crust and Mr. Lomer Hogg. Show them up immediately they come.

DAWSON. Mr. Hogg has just arrived, Sir John, Here he is, Sir. Mr. Hogg.

(Enter Mr. Lomer Hogg, known as the dynamo of St. James St. He is a large man, about fifty years of age, broad and burly and of grouchy temperament. He is almost bald with a thick, short neck, and small eyes beneath bushy brows. His voice is deep, brusque and impetuous,)

SIR JOHN. Good evening, Hogg. How are you to-night? Take a chair.

(Dawson brings chair forward.)

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HOGG. Not bad. Not bad.

SIR JOHN. Dawson, I'm also expecting a Mr. Jarvis. Show him in when he arrives.

DAWSON. Yes, Sir John. *(Exit)*

SIR JOHN. Well, Hogg, have you heard the news?

HOGG. About this extended sitting of the price control board? I should say I have. This thing must be stopped. *(Grumpily)* The country's going to the dogs.

SIR JOHN. *(drily)* I wasn't talking about the price control board, but about the date of the general election.

HOGG. I thought we decided to wait until December.

SIR JOHN. We did, but you know what the Premier is. So . . . erratic! He's decided on the third week of October.

HOGG. *(moodily)* I suppose you're certain of this.

SIR JOHN. Quite. My informant is absolutely reliable. The usual source you know—. Anyway, that gives us about nine weeks.

HOGG. Yes, yes. Plenty of time. What about Jarvis? He promised to be here early, but of course he's late as usual.

SIR JOHN. He's had a lot to do. Dicktorson and Middleton aren't easy men to deal with.

HOGG. Well, the more I think of our idea of a national government, the less I like it. I don't trust Dicktorson. He's just run wild in these last five years, what with his national bank, his marketing act, this price control board, debt adjustment and God knows what. Downright socialism. I call it.

SIR JOHN. *(cautiously)* Yes, I'm afraid Dicktorson has gone too far.

HOGG. If we can't control the government we won't be in control of our own businesses pretty soon. Just think of it. You and Crust and I, among us, direct the policy of about a hundred of the biggest business concerns in the country, but we can't manage a fellow like Dicktorson. It's rank nonsense.

SIR JOHN. The trouble with Dicktorson is that he's rich himself. He even financed his own election. It's rather more difficult to dictate to men with money than it is to men without.

HOGG. I've had enough of prime ministers that don't have to come to us for the sinews of war. They get much too

cocky. The country's going to the dogs.

SIR JOHN. Yes, business is—not good.

HOGG. Good? It's awful. Look at the stock market. No buoyancy, no real confidence. There's hardly been a new issue of common or preferred stock for years. Dividends cut to the bone, or passed altogether. The labouring classes getting more truculent every day. And on top of it all, this fellow Dicktorson pushing through his socialistic legislation in direct defiance of our instructions. He's impossible.

SIR JOHN. I'm inclined to agree with you. Do you know that to all intents and purposes he ordered me out of his office!

HOGG. *(gloomily)* I can well believe it.

SIR JOHN. Just because I insisted that the government back the loan my bank made to the pulp and paper industry.

HOGG. Why, the stability of our national credit was at stake.

SIR JOHN. *(drily)* I pointed that out. But he spoke of "sacred duty."

HOGG. Bah! When he gets off on that track I always know he's some pig-headed idea of his own he doesn't want to argue about. Don't worry. We'll settle his hash. Remember, for twenty-five years and more every government in Canada has been made or unmade in this little room. We've done it before and we can do it again.

(Enter Dawson.)

DAWSON. Senator Crust.

(Enter Crust. The Hon. Joseph Crust, Senator, is a man of some sixty years, with a pink, babyish face and a benign expression. He is tall and lean and had been quite a dandy in his day. He would do good whenever it was not inconvenient but is mentally incapable of following a principle beyond the surface.)

CRUST. *(rubbing his hands, affably)* Ah, good evening, Sir John. Good evening, Hogg. A very fine evening indeed. Very sorry to be late, Sir John. I had a meeting of the Missionary Society and couldn't get away. Then the dear old Bishop button-holed me with one of his endless anecdotes.

SIR JOHN. Oh, don't apologize! Hogg and I have had a pleasant little chat. I've just told him about the date of the general election—late in October. We're expecting every minute to hear from Jarvis. He's been in touch with both

of the old parties, you know, about the possibility of a national government.

CRUST. Ah yes! Yes, indeed! A most excellent idea.

HOGG. You think so, do you? Well, I don't.

CRUST. *(piously)* I think it's just what we need. In times of national crisis like the present, we should sink all personal differences and think only of keeping the ship of state afloat. I only hope that the Socialists will see things from the same enlightened point of view.

HOGG. Good God, man, what are you talking about? Socialists in a national cabinet! One of the main reasons for having one is that it would keep the Socialists in their place for at least five years. Besides we've got to draw the line somewhere. You can't play with pitch and keep your hands clean.

SIR JOHN. Crust's suggestion is not without its good points, Hogg. Of course it is—unlikely—that they would accept but it might—ah—spike their guns. We don't want to give McGregor any handle against us.

CRUST. By no means! Any suggestion of self-interest on our part would be fatal at this juncture.

HOGG. And that leader of theirs—that chap McGregor—he's a damned sight too clever for my taste. And people trust him for some reason!

SIR JOHN. I know. He's on the radio to-night. Suppose we tune in and get a line on what he has to say. *(Rising and moving toward the radio)* Meantime, you'd better fortify yourselves with a drink *(Presses button.)*

CRUST. Do you know I really enjoy a little drink of good Scotch in the evening.

HOGG. I like it any time.

(Dawson appears with a tray of decanters, bottles and glasses, placing it on the table to Sir John's right.)

SIR JOHN. Please help yourselves, gentlemen.

(Hogg and Crust pour their drinks, Horn manipulates the radio; presently McGregor's voice is heard distinctly. He is speaking with deliberation and articulating with care. Horn returns to the table, pours himself a drink and resumes his seat. All sip their drinks and listen.)

MCGREGOR. *(over the radio)*. These facts I have brought to you as they came from every riding. They indicate a hope of victory which never before in our history could have been reasonably entertained. This is a crusade for justice.

The teeth of the hungry are set on edge by the abundance they have produced but which they are not permitted to enjoy. The banner of Socialism, maligned by those whose greed it challenges, is now the proud symbol of justice and life. Beneath its folds the multitudes which once battled each other for a meagre existence, now march together against poverty — the common foe. The farmers of our Western plains, rewarded with debts for a life-time of toil, are shoulder to shoulder with the disinherited workers of the factories.

Yet I doubt not that even at this moment the privileged few are making plans for our overthrow.

HOGG. Shut it off.

MCGREGOR. But we will win. Should fear at any moment becloud the vision of victory—Remember—that you have nothing to lose but your chains, and——

(Horn shuts off the radio as Jarvis is ushered in by Dawson. Jarvis, of Jarvis, Moore and Stoughton, Barristers and Solicitors, is in his forties; of medium height, soft and rather corpulent, dressed in a loose-fitting tweed suit which suggests that he preferred comfort to style. Under his easygoing manner, he conceals a mind as sharp and ruthless as a steel trap.)

SIR JOHN. Come in Jarvis. We were just putting in the time listening to McGregor until your arrival.

HOGG. *(still thinking of McGregor's speech, and with a look of determination which is almost fearful.)* Arrant nonsense, it was. We'll see who has the power when the ballots are counted.

SIR JOHN. *(points Jarvis to the tray)* Have a drink.

JARVIS. *(who has placed a portfolio on the table, pours himself a drink and seats himself at the right of Crust.)* It's not as easy to shut those birds off as it is to shut off the radio.

SIR JOHN. No. The Socialists are the real danger this time. They've captured three of the provinces; they're the official opposition in others; they've done well in recent municipal elections.

JARVIS. Undoubtedly, if there were an election to-morrow, the government would be Socialist.

HOGG. *(with a grin)* But since the election comes two months from now?

JARVIS. The Patriots will be in power.

CRUST. *(anxiously)* Are you sure of that?

JARVIS. Wait till I tell you what the strategy committee is planning, and you'll be sure, too.

SIR JOHN. McGregor is no fool; he has a great mind and he is well informed.

HOGG. He's fool enough to tackle empty stomachs with abstract reasoning.

JARVIS. Don't mistake now—an empty stomach is better than a full one for election purposes.

SIR JOHN. And there is nothing more attractive than a sentimental appeal—starving children, homeless people and so forth.

CRUST. By the way, have you tried to get McGregor to join the Patriots? Very likely all he wants is a job.

SIR JOHN. McGregor is a man I would like to have with us.

HOGG. Why not—we have the price, haven't we?

SIR JOHN. He's unusual; money doesn't appeal to him as it does to others.

HOGG. If we fail with him, he'll be the first one.

JARVIS. I'll send Higgins to see him, with a really good offer. How far are you prepared to go? A seat in the Cabinet, or a nice job in the Government service?

HOGG. If we can't buy him, we'll break him.

SIR JOHN. We really can't offer McGregor anything until we know whether there's going to be a national government, can we?

JARVIS. Well, the national government proposal is off.

HOGG. Who baulked—Dicktorson or Middleton?

JARVIS. Dicktorson, of course. Wouldn't discuss it. Ordered me out.

SIR JOHN. That's his style.

JARVIS. Insists on coming here to-night to talk to you gentlemen personally.

CRUST. Middleton was agreeable?

JARVIS. Yes, but thought we could get along without a national government.

SIR JOHN. You didn't tell him of Dicktorson's refusal?

JARVIS. Not likely—

SIR JOHN. Does Middleton think he can win?

JARVIS. Yes, with the assistance we are in a position to give him.

SIR JOHN. *(considering)* If the Patriots form a govern-

ment under Middleton, that would be as good for us as a national government.

HOGG. The Patriot Party it is, then.

SIR JOHN. *(more cautiously)* What about the railway problem?

JARVIS. Middleton says he can handle that as smoothly as he did the opposition to the national bank.

HOGG. That was good work.

SIR JOHN. Yes, he talked in favour of a nationalized bank because he knew it was popular.

CRUST. *(with a chuckle)* Pretending that he voted against the central bank because it was not nationalized, when he really did it to please us.

JARVIS. He will handle the railway problem in a similar way.

CRUST. How?

JARVIS. Both under one management for appearances; separate accounts for profit-taking purposes.

HOGG. The old game! Professes to be doing both, while he's really doing neither.

SIR JOHN. The man is a diplomat, certainly.

JARVIS. That's it. Pleases the people with the idea of co-operation and economy, and pleases us, of course, because we know it is still competition.

SIR JOHN. Far better for us that way. It will show the undesirability of nationalization.

HOGG. We get our C.P.R. dividends from increased earnings of the road, and our C.N.R. dividends from increased taxes.

JARVIS. And as the C.N.R. taxes increase, the people will insist on being rid of it to reduce taxation.

HOGG. Then follows our railway monopoly.

JARVIS. That's precisely as Middleton outlined it.

HOGG. I'm glad the national government idea is off. It's always dangerous to put both our parties together.

SIR JOHN. It should never be done except in the gravest emergency. When they're both subject to the public wrath at the one time, then our position becomes most precarious.

CRUST. *(chuckling to himself)* Therein lies the genius of our two-party system. There's always opportunity for a change. *(Shakes with derisive laughter.)*

HOGG. Oh, sure! The voters think they're getting a change when they turn from Dicktorson to Middleton, or from the

Loyalists to the Patriots.

SIR JOHN. *(with confident superiority)* While all the time we are the real government. Thank God, we never change.

HOGG. What else have you to report, Jarvis?

JARVIS. Middleton accepts all conditions without reservation.

HOGG. Good! Let's run over them again, and make sure of them.

JARVIS. *(reads from memo)* No interference with private enterprises. The abandonment of the price spread inquiry. Repeal of the Marketing Act. Removal of all restrictions on the liberty of the individual from the Central Bank Act. Nationalization of the debts of defunct corporations, in order to preserve our national credit. And, of course, no appreciable alteration of the tariff.

CRUST. We should add a back-to-the-land policy to that.

HOGG. We don't want any fool *policy*. All that we want is to be left alone, to be free, like any Britisher, to do what we like.

CRUST. That's just it. and we won't be free unless the people are quieted down with something.

SIR JOHN. With what, for instance?

CRUST. Nothing like clearing land, milking cows, and pulling weeds, to keep people from revolutionary notions.

HOGG. *(premptorily)* Nonsense! Go on, Jarvis.

CRUST. Oh, very well. But this back-to-the-land idea is entirely new,—one of my own. It just came to me.

JARVIS. *(with a dry smile)* Middleton was enthusiastic over your stipulations. Made quite a little speech about how they were in harmony with the constitutional rights of a free parliament and the liberty of the individual and therefore, in harmony with Patriot principles.

HOGG. I like that fellow, Middleton. He's a real leader.

SIR JOHN. None better. He'll make the people believe that unemployment is due to Dicktorson's tampering with the rights of a free parliament, whatever that is.

HOGG. Parliament should be free to do what we want it to do, but instead, it has been doing what Dicktorson told it to do.

CRUST. Ah yes, Middleton is delightful. He declared in parliament last year that there is nothing new under the sun.

HOGG. *(impatiently)* Ach! What's that got to do with

anything?

SIR JOHN. *(laughing)* For instance, if there was no unemployment in the days of the Pharaohs, and there's nothing new under the sun, it follows that there's no unemployment now.

CRUST. And everything else goes the same way. That shows the advantage of applying the Scriptures.

SIR JOHN. I liked that other idea of Middleton's though, when he said that the way to cure unemployment is to change the hearts of the unemployed. Better to keep them busy changing their own hearts than to have them working on changing the system.

CRUST. That speech will get Middleton the church vote, anyhow. It's very like something the dear old Archdeacon was saying—

HOGG. *(to Jarvis, who is looking bored)* Let's get on. What about the strategy of the Patriots? Are we going to get our money's worth?

JARVIS. Your wishes were never more highly regarded, and the results never more certain.

SIR JOHN. Suppose I have the treasurer of the Frontenac Power Company pay over one million to the Patriot Party in anticipation of certain Orders-in-Council. Can Middleton guarantee the necessary action?

JARVIS. Yes. The Orders-in-Council will be passed just as soon as he's comfortably settled in power.

SIR JOHN. The work of the party will not be retarded for lack of money, then?

JARVIS. No. Everything's going at fever heat.

HOGG. What about their platform? It will have to be more attractive than usual.

JARVIS. Middleton refuses to have any platform except the same old chart.

HOGG. Rubbish! That won't do.

JARVIS. He insists that hate of the Loyalists and fear of the Socialists will be sufficient. He thinks that fear is the best bet.

CRUST. Fear?

JARVIS. Yes. Fear of Communism if the Socialists are elected, and fear of dictatorship if the Loyalists are returned.

HOGG. And so the Patriots are to have no platform?

JARVIS. Practically none. Middleton is certain that the

people won't go back to Dicktorson and that we can scare them from McGregor by bogey talk about Russia. Then, there's nowhere else for them to go but to Middleton.

SIR JOHN. Mr. Haffey's working on the platform and slogans, you know. There's no one knows so well how to appeal to the mass ignorance.

HOGG. Nothing new about that.

JARVIS. To be attractive, a platform mustn't be new; it must be one our forefathers grew up with, a homey sort of platform which they have talked about and voted for in better times,—one that they have grown up with but haven't grown up to, if you get me.

HOGG. And the slogans?

JARVIS. "It's time for a change", and, "Beat Dicktorson and hard times."

HOGG. Good. That hitches all our disasters to the present administration.

SIR JOHN. Has Haffey any ideas yet for propaganda?

JARVIS. He says the Crow's Nest Pass agreement can be made a real vote-getter in the West.

HOGG. You can't get votes with what you've already given people. It's what you're going to give that counts.

JARVIS. True. But people can be made to believe that if the Loyalists are elected they will cancel the Crow's Nest agreement. He suggested a large poster cartoon for use in the West.

CRUST. Something highly-coloured and easy to remember, whether it means anything or not. Ah yes, that's sound.

JARVIS. *(describing it with his hands)* A picture of a crow's nest with an egg in it. The egg to be marked "Two Hundred Million Dollars". The Loyalists represented as a vulture bent on devouring it, while the Patriot party is represented as a fully armed knight, sitting on the nest's rim, saying, "Ye shall not pass."

CRUST. Excellent!

HOGG. It seems to me just plain foolish. What about personating? Who's attending to that?

JARVIS. Mr. Sly is in charge, as usual. The gang from Chicago has been engaged.

CRUST. *(eagerly)* And all the delicious patronage plums?

JARVIS. Being dangled when and where they'll do the most good.

SIR JOHN. What about the scandal committee? I have

very little hope of getting McGregor any other way. He's a personality to be reckoned with. We can't meet his arguments, and he has a great following.

CRUST. Ah, yes! He's really smart enough to be on our side.

HOGG. He must be got, one way or another. What's to be done if we can't buy him? I must be satisfied on that point.

JARVIS. Well, the scandalmongers are all under the direction of Mr. Muffles.

CRUST. Now, now, gentlemen, I can't consent to the spreading of dirty stories. We must keep our own hands clean. *(He rubs his pontifically.)*

(Hogg scowls and Sir John smiles cynically.)

JARVIS. *(soothingly)* There will be no dirty stories. The art of scandal is to insinuate a depth of depravity in your opponents, which, in the best interests of public morality, cannot be stated in specific detail.

CRUST. Ah, just insinuation. That's safe enough.

HOGG. *(as if tired of waiting for the right answer)* Jarvis, our success in this election depends on the downfall of McGregor. It'll take more than talk to upset him. I want assurance from you that you are giving him special attention.

JARVIS. Rest assured, sir. I have plans in progress which will absolutely guarantee the downfall of McGregor.

CRUST. Hadn't you better tell us what your plans are?

JARVIS. Well, I rather think that it would be inadvisable to go into detail. In matters of this sort it isn't usual to —

SIR JOHN. *(interrupting)* Oh, quite! Quite! We'll leave all that to you, Jarvis.

CRUST. You'll be careful, Jarvis? The Good Book says we must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

JARVIS. Oh yes, of course. That's understood.

SIR JOHN. After all, Crust, Jarvis has acquitted himself efficiently in matters of this sort before. I think we can trust to his discretion.

HOGG. Yes. If Jarvis knows what he's going to do, that's all the assurance we need.

JARVIS. Then I am to assume, gentlemen, that you are leaving all details in the matter of getting McGregor to me?

ALL. Yes, Yes, certainly.

SIR JOHN. Let's have a drink on it. *(looking at his watch)*

You'd better hurry. The Prime Minister will be here in a minute. He's a loganberry fiend.

(Each pours his own.)

JARVIS. Dicktorson is death on drink, isn't he?

CRUST. *(in the act of tipping up a good one)* Doesn't he ever take a little for the stomach's sake?

HOGG. *(between sips)* Doesn't have to—always drunk with self-importance.

SIR JOHN. When you've finished your drink, Jarvis, perhaps you'd better go. There's no use his seeing you here.

CRUST. Be careful with all your contacts. No incriminating links, remember, either between you and us or between you and Middleton.

HOGG. But stop at nothing when victory's at stake.

SIR JOHN. *(raising his glass)* Fortify yourselves for the Prime Minister's blow-off.

DAWSON. *(rushing into the room, says in a loud whisper)* Excuse me, sir, the Prime Minister has arrived and says he cannot wait.

SIR JOHN. My God, hurry.

(All are in haste to get rid of the drink in their glasses so as to receive the Prime Minister in sober and decorous manner.

Just then the Prime Minister appears in the door. He is a ruddy well-preserved man of sixty-five, but looks much younger. He is well-groomed and faultlessly attired in conventional dress; his thin hair is carefully combed back revealing a well-shaped head and fine intellectual brow; his jaw is bull-doggish; he oozes vigour, vitality and self-assurance.

Horn, swallowing his Scotch straight and in a hurry, has choked, and is taken with a fit of coughing. Hogg, finding his empty glass in his hand and no place to hide it, quickly slips it into Jarvis's pocket. The others stand looking foolish, knowing that they should not have glasses in their hands in the presence of the loganberry fiend. Jarvis and Crust put theirs down hurriedly without having finished the contents Horn, still coughing, sets his glass on the table, and advances to meet the Prime Minister.)

SIR JOHN. *(coughs)* Delighted, Mr. *(coughs)* Dicktorson *(coughs)*, I am sure. *(coughs)* Excuse me, sir, *(coughs)* I have an attack of my hay fever.

(He extends his hand, which the Prime Minister takes as he might a piece of sour liver.)

SIR JOHN. *(introducing the guests, who are all standing by the table)* Mr. Hogg, Senator Crust, and Mr. Jarvis. You have met these gentlemen before?

DICKTORSON. *(coolly nodding in their direction)* I have.

SIR JOHN. Take a seat.

DICKTORSON. Well, gentlemen, I did not come here, as you may expect, to hear what you have to say; I came expressly to say some things to you.

(Horn, Crust and Hogg look at each other as if they had surmised the intent of their visitor. The Prime Minister takes the easy chair at the right of the fire-place. Jarvis slips out unnoticed. The others draw back their chairs from the table and resume their seats facing Dicktorson.)

DICKTORSON. Four years ago—at the last election, to be specific—I made no bargain with you whatever. I paid all the expenses of the election out of my own pocket. Fortunately, I was in a position so to do. You supported me, it is true, not at my request, but because you knew the Patriots could not be re-elected to office. I made no promise to you. Is that clear?

CRUST. Er—Mr. Dicktorson, we don't want to er—thresh old straw, as it were. The Socialist Party is popular and we think that your legislation has encouraged it.

DICKTORSON. What!

CRUST. The Marketing Act, for instance. Anyhow, we thought that the Loyalists and the Patriots might join in forming a national government, and thus defeat the Socialists.

DICKTORSON. So that's your proposal?

CRUST. Well, if you get what I mean, er—if you won't play cricket, er—well, dash it all, we're not satisfied with the way you are doing things.

(Horn and Hogg look daggers at Crust.)

DICKTORSON. *(restraining his temper with difficulty)* Who cares whether you're satisfied or not?

HOGG. *(looking angry, but holding himself well in check)* There's no cause for heat.

DICKTORSON. Who's hot?

SIR JOHN. *(easily)* Well the fact is, we are disappointed.

HOGG. Very disappointed. Your Government has interferred with freedom in business. You've put us on the spot in public view before commissions; you've restricted us by

legislation; you've reduced the value of our legitimate holdings through your inflation of the currency. However, we recognize that you have great ability. We were prepared to find a Cabinet position for you in a national government. We understand you have refused. In that case, we shall be compelled to elect Middleton at the head of a Patriot government.

DICKTORSON. *(choleric, and spluttering with repressed rage and righteous indignation)* Impudence! Colossal and unbridled impudence! Do you think that you can intimidate me, or gain my consent to a conspiracy by offering me the crumbs of office? Do you think that the Prime Minister of this country must come, fawning, cap in hand, to lick the boots of a brainless trust like you? Who are you? Yes, who are you?

SIR JOHN. Mr. Dicktorson, you forget yourself!

DICKTORSON. *(without noticing Horn)* There's Jarvis *(looks around for him)*—Gone! No wonder, performing deeds for you that you dare not own. You thrust him out like a devil's claw to pick your chestnuts from the fires of the People's wrath.

HOGG *(looking furious)* That's enough, Dicktorson. That sort of talk may go down with the electors, but it doesn't go down here.

DICKTORSON. You can't take it.

CRUST. Tut, tut, gentlemen!

DICKTORSON. Don't you "tut, tut" me,—I won't be "tutted".—I know your game. *(pointing)* There is Senator Crust, ignorant by the grace of God, and wealthy by the accident of fortune. There's Hogg, a suitable name; and you, Horn, with your wildcat schemes to mulct the public, and then you ask me to be silent. *(sputters)* Poof!

SIR JOHN. Surely, Mr. Dicktorson, this onslaught ill-becomes a prime minister, especially to his host.

(Hogg has a hand on each side of his chair, as if preparing to rise, but only stares at the Prime Minister.)

DICKTORSON. *(rising and sweeping them all with a glance of scorn, and shaking his head from side to side)* Let me tell you once and for all, and beyond the peradventure of a doubt, that I will not be managed by you, nor sell my soul for a mess of pottage; on the contrary, I will not rest content until your vile hands are torn from their stranglehold upon the throat of this fair Dominion. I will take this mat-

ter to the foot of the throne. There's my gauntlet. That's the position in respect to that.

SIR JOHN. Why object to a national government?

DICKTORSON. As for a national government, there are issues like the railways, and debts, which no party government can settle alone. I believe in such a national government and shall endeavour to move in that direction, but I shall never be a party to forming a national government as a cloak for your chicanery.

(He prepares to go.)

SIR JOHN. Just one word, Mr. Dicktorson. Be seated please, for a moment more.

(The Prime Minister resumes his seat reluctantly.)

SIR JOHN. We are the business men who built up this country. We finance every enterprise, build railways, canals, factories, and power plants. We know how to run governments, and we can't allow you to retain power unless we have assurance.

DICKTORSON. You will get no assurance from me.

SIR JOHN. Then you will get no support from us.

DICKTORSON. *(rising again)* I will not bandy words with you. To become Prime Minister was the dream of my youth. The ambition of my life. I lived for that, prepared myself for that, and I am now Prime Minister.

HOGG. *(getting over his buck fever)* That's the trouble.

DICKTORSON. Trouble for you no doubt. Do you suppose I coveted this position for its shabby habiliments of brief authority? Or do you suppose I became Prime Minister to make that sacred office a puppet of St. James Street?

HOGG. Bah!

CRUST. *(rising and looking ferocious)* Dicktorson, I'm disappointed in you. You're a traitor to your class.

DICKTORSON. To that extent I have been honest with the people.

SIR JOHN. Strange that the people shouldn't appreciate so noble a champion. Look at the by-elections.

DICKTORSON. The people are under your influence, exercised through the organized opposition and the press. You have led them to believe that my Government brought on this depression.

SIR JOHN. So you did, by curbing the liberty of private

enterprise.

DICKTORSON. Snaring jackals may be hard on the lions, but it isn't bad for the cattle. I know that popular sentiment is against my Government, but it must be clear to any sensible man that present economic conditions are the fruits of a system which is centuries old, . . . fruits which, unhappily for me, ripened during my time of office.

SIR JOHN. Well, if you have served the people so well, let them re-elect you—we won't. You have done your best to destroy us.

DICKTORSON. Unfortunate indeed, that greater success has not attended my efforts in that respect. Be that as it may, I am content to leave my record to the more reasonable judgment of future history. I have passed through a trying period, and I can say, in the noble words of Henley —

"In the fell clutch of circumstance,
I have not winced nor cried aloud,
Under the bludgeoning of chance,
My head is bloody but unbowed."

HOGG. Don't waste your eloquence on us!

(They all laugh and Dicktorson, grabbing his hat and stick, makes for the door in high dudgeon. He turns, however, to fire a parting shot.)

DICKTORSON. To speak and act for the people as I see fit is my highest and most sacred duty. I have no hankering for the empty shell of office. I will be Prime Minister in my constitutional right, or not at all.

(He retires and slams the door.)

(They stare at each other in silent amazement for several seconds.)

SIR JOHN. That settles it, our money goes on Middleton.

CURTAIN

ACT II.

SCENE 1.

TIME, FOUR WEEKS LATER, 10 A.M.

A large, bare-looking, poorly furnished office which is being used as the temporary headquarters of the Socialist Party during the election now in full swing. The only door opens from the street and is on the left. A desk, half a dozen cheap chairs, a table and a typewriter constitute the furniture. The desk is about the centre of the room; the table and typewriter to the right, but more to the front of the stage. On the walls are maps of constituencies, with here and there a cartoon tacked up. On the wall behind the desk is a large photograph of Karl Marx, and right beneath it is a small framed print of Millet's "Man with the Hoe".

Miss Minnie Wilton is seated at the table, engaged in folding circulars and enclosing them in envelopes. She is well-groomed and smart looking. Her hair lies in smooth waves, her finger nails are pink and highly polished, and she is wearing a well-cut black dress trimmed with white.

The door opens, and Jarvis enters. He looks around to make sure that no one else is present. Miss Wilton, on seeing him enter, drops her work excitedly and turns in her chair to meet him. He moves swiftly to the table with an anxious look on his face, apparently fearful of some one finding him there.

JARVIS. *(in half-whisper)* What did you want to see me about so urgently? Is anything wrong?

MISS WILTON. Yes, Mr. Jarvis, I had to call you. This whole business is wrong and I can't go through with it.

JARVIS. *(in a cold, sharp voice)* You can't eh? Why not?

MISS WILTON. Because Mr. McGregor is so different, and, well, because I just can't. He's a gentleman; he's giving his life to help people just like me who are unemployed; and, —and he's trusted me with important work, and—

JARVIS. Didn't I trust you too? And trust you first, for that matter?

MISS WILTON. That's different.

JARVIS. Yes! You're in love with the big, bold, gentleman Bolshevik. *(sneers).*

MISS WILTON. *(with heat)* You have no right to say such a thing.

JARVIS. I know your kind,—falls for everything with breeches.

MISS WILTON. Did I fall for you?

JARVIS. You had your eye on the big game. *(sneers)* A married man with children! *(laughs derisively)* The leader of a party, aspiring to be Prime Minister, and you an unemployed stenographer!

MISS WILTON. Rave on, Mr. Jarvis.

JARVIS. He'll make love to you here behind these walls —but he'll spurn you before the public.

MISS WILTON. You are all wrong. Mr. McGregor has never made love to me.

JARVIS. Don't you know that we have the evidence now? Hasn't he often driven you home? Hasn't he brought correspondence to your apartment several evenings?

MISS WILTON. Even if you are wicked enough to use that, who'll lay the charge? I won't.

JARVIS. *(with unrestrained anger)* This is a fine time for you to start talking about wickedness after being in my employ for a month. What about the money you were paid and the bargain you made?

MISS WILTON. *(hanging her head and in a sad, low voice.)* I have no excuse to offer for that except the one you know, the only one that made me ever consider such a thing —starvation.

JARVIS. *(changing his tactics, tries cajoling)* Be a sport. There's nothing really wrong about this and think of the thousands you'll get for doing it. You won't ever need to worry about starvation again.

MISS WILTON. No. I've made up my mind.

JARVIS. Well, there are lots of others who'll be glad of the job.

MISS WILTON. Probably.

JARVIS. *(pauses a moment in thought, then his crafty face lights up with a new idea)* Perhaps you're right, after all. I don't want to get you into any trouble.

MISS WILTON. I'm not blaming you for anything.

JARVIS. All right, forget it. I'm not as cruel and hard a brute as you think. *(A brief silence, during which Jarvis is in deep contemplation of his new plot. Miss Wilton sits*

with bowed head, clasping and unclasping her fingers in a nervous manner.)

JARVIS. Will you continue here until after the election, just as if our arrangement still held good?

MISS WILTON. I can't. I must try to find work.

JARVIS. *(half sneeringly)* You wouldn't like your hero to know the sort of game you are running away from.

MISS WILTON. Oh, if he ever found out that I'd allowed myself to be hired to do such a thing, I'd die!

JARVIS. How can you get away without having to tell him?

MISS WILTON. I'm going to be called away unexpectedly.

JARVIS. Just try it! It won't be hard to find a way of letting him know why you were called away and where you may be found.

MISS WILTON. You wouldn't do that!

JARVIS. I certainly would, unless you remain here until the election is over.

MISS WILTON. No, no! I can't stay. I can't stand it!

JARVIS. Now see here, young lady, get this, and I don't mean maybe. I accept your decision not to go through with the original arrangement, but there is a reason, which is none of your business, why you must remain here as we planned. If you do stay, you'll be paid the wages. If not, so help me God, I'll tell McGregor what you came here for!

MISS WILTON. *(resignedly)* I don't understand it. If I do stay, is it to be understood that I'm really working for McGregor, and not for you?

JARVIS. That's right.

MISS WILTON. Very well, I'll stay. I feel all wrong inside over taking your money but I'll repay it as soon as I can. I—I feel so much better—as if I had been stifling and could breathe again.

JARVIS. You said it, so do I.

(Jarvis goes out and Miss Wilton resumes her work. As the Socialist Executive Council arrives, the members seat themselves in a semicircle around the desk, John West in the centre. West is a young man, about thirty-five, with a bright expression. He hums or whistles the "Red Flag" incessantly, going a little flat at the end of each bar.

On his right sits Mrs. Abbie Martin, President of the United Farm Women's national organization. She is a middle-aged woman, tall and of a good figure. Her dark

hair, streaked with grey, is coiled simply on her neck.

Next to her on the right sits Professor Lorne Jenkins, who is rather small and slim. His head is bald halfway back from his brow, his face though pale is fine, strong and attractive. He has a habit of keeping a crooked pipe constantly in his mouth. He plays with it absentmindedly more than he smokes it, moving it from side to side and in and out of his mouth while giving his attention to any thing.

To the left of Mr. West, sits Mrs. Gilbert Andrews, President of the National Women's Labour League. She is young, dainty and trim, with bobbed hair. Alert and full of enthusiasm.

On her left is Dr. Eber Muir, a short, stodgy, comfortable-looking middle-aged man, with horn-rimmed glasses and soft, gentle voice.)

WEST. *(enters first, breezingly)* Hello, Miss Wilton, Where's McGregor?

MISS WILTON. He was speaking at Peterboro last night; his train won't be in till ten. You're to carry on.

WEST. Good! None of us need to worry about this place any more now that we have you to look after things for us.

(Enter Mrs. Martin and Mrs. Andrews together.)

MISS WILTON. Good morning, ladies.

MRS. ANDREWS. It is a good morning isn't it? A morning for victories.

WEST. Any morning should be that sort for you.

MRS. MARTIN. Where are the others?

WEST. Well, we don't need to wait for them to come before we sit down. *(They find chairs. While they are doing so Jenkins and Muir enter).*

MUIR. We must apologize, Jenkins, we're the last to arrive.

JENKINS. No, we're not. McGregor isn't here himself, yet.

WEST. He may be a little late. He wants us to go ahead.

JENKINS. You take the chair, then, and let's get on.

WEST. Is that agreed?

ALL. Agreed.

WEST. Well, would you like to discuss that matter of modification of policy, which we debated at length yesterday? As I remember it, the rest of our business was completed.

MRS. MARTIN. Better leave the decision on that till Mr. McGregor is present.

WEST. By all means. However, there's another matter in connection with Bob himself, that I'd like to settle before he gets here.

MRS. ANDREWS. What's that?

WEST. Briefly, it's this: Bob has put all he has into the election. He's even thinking of selling his car.

MUIR. It gives him pleasure to make sacrifices for the movement. Surely that is no matter for regret!

WEST. Sure. It's not that I'm worrying about. But he's living in a garret practically without furniture, except an old ramshackle bed. He takes his meals, when he takes them, at the fish and chip joint about two blocks from here. Worst of all, he is travelling every night, and he can't afford a sleeper. He sits in the day coach night after night. No one can keep that up.

MRS. MARTIN. Oh, no, we mustn't let him do that!

MRS. ANDREWS. It's false economy, really.

JENKINS. What did you have in mind, West?

WEST. That this executive authorize the financing of our leader's travelling expenses out of our Central Dime Fund

JENKINS. Is there enough money in the Fund?

MRS. MARTIN. About a thousand dollars.

MRS. ANDREWS. If there were a million, it couldn't be better spent.

MUIR. Yes, it all depends on McGregor. If anything were to happen to him, our cause would be doomed.

WEST. Is it agreed, then?

ALL. Agreed.

WEST. That leaves us with the discussion of yesterday to finish. Shall we go on with that?

MRS. ANDREWS. I'd like to get it clearer in my mind just what Professor Jenkins' idea is.

JENKINS. My point was to adopt the Roosevelt tactics. He won on his "New Deal" platform, because he never tried to explain to the people either what it meant, or how he would proceed.

MUIR. I would be the last person in the world to compromise on Socialist principles. But it may be that we should talk a little less about them. There's no use in alarming people.

WEST. Absolutely not. If I had my way, I'd play every trick on the old parties which they play on us, and more if I could think of them.

MRS. MARTIN. What would be the good of a Socialist party if it is just going to play the same old game?

JENKINS. I agree with you entirely, but there is such a thing—Oh, good morning, Mr. McGregor.

(Robert McGregor, the Socialist leader, enters, carrying a small, black travelling bag. He looks pale and weary, as if he had slept badly, although his frame is strong, well-built and athletic. He is forty-five years of age, clean-shaven, broad of forehead, firm of chin and square of jaw, with eyes that look straight at men and through them. His whole personality expresses purpose, patience and courage. He hangs his hat on the wall, puts down his bag in the left corner and goes over to Miss Wilton.)

McGREGOR. I'll be with you in a moment, Jack. *(Hands Miss Wilton papers and gives her directions.)*

MRS. ANDREWS. Was it a successful meeting in Peterboro, Mr. McGregor?

McGREGOR. Yes, very.

(He comes to the desk and West gives up his chair, getting another.)

WEST. Bob, we are still discussing what you call pouring the water of expediency into the pure milk of principles.

McGREGOR. What do *you* call it, Jenkins?

JENKINS. I don't know Mr. McGregor. I was just about to say, when you came in, that I thought we were somewhat lacking in strategy. For instance, if you want to coax chickens from one coop to another you sprinkle grain along the path between the coops, and put lots of grain inside the new coop.

MRS. ANDREWS. That's just what the old parties do, isn't it?

JENKINS. Yes, and they'll get all the chickens into their old ramshackle coops while we stand in the barnyard explaining, elaborately the hygienic and architectural advantages of our new one.

MRS. MARTIN. I wonder if people are just like chickens?

JENKINS. Do we want to be a practical party or merely a group of idealists grasping at the stars?

MRS. MARTIN. Are those who try to frighten people into voting for them the only practical ones?

JENKINS. Yes, if they're the only ones who get results.

MRS. ANDREWS. Is it really practical in the end? Isn't this depression the result of exploiting ignorance and fear

at the ballot box? Who'd call that practical?

JENKINS. Its results are practical enough, unfortunately.

MRS. MARTIN. Professor, do you contend that the Socialists should alter their policy?

JENKINS. Not at all. We're not discussing policy—but tactics. It's not what we're going to do, but how we're going to get a chance to do it.

MRS. ANDREWS. *(sarcastically)* You mean then, that you'd change a few words here and there like using "evolution" instead of "revolution," and "co-operation" instead of "Socialism"!

MRS. MARTIN. Surely, to hide a real intention in mere words is the method of a politician, not a statesman.

JENKINS. I wasn't thinking of mere words, but even words are important. If not, why do you insist upon the use of certain words?

MRS. MARTIN. Because those words stand for what we mean.

JENKINS. Do they? Those words mean something very different to other people.

MRS. ANDREWS. Let them learn the meaning of words then.

JENKINS. Take the word asylum, which most people associate with insanity—If you were going to build a home for old people, and wanted them to be happy in it, would you call it an asylum?

MRS. ANDREWS. *(producing a cigarette, and motioning to West for a light)* Why not? *(She exhales a cloud of smoke, and Mrs. Martin draws away slightly.)*

JENKINS. Well, people have a prejudice against asylums.

MUIR. There's something in that.

JENKINS. Let me put my view in a word—to win, we must get votes of millions who may never understand the real meaning of anything.

MRS. ANDREWS. Very well—let all the fools vote for the old parties—we can get along without the fools.

JENKINS. But they're not fools—they're simply incapable of abstract reasoning.

MRS. ANDREWS. *(snappily)* The Socialist party can spare all those who can't reason.

JENKINS. That's like forbidding any one to turn on an electric light unless he understands electricity.

MRS. ANDREWS. Ridiculous!

JENKINS. *(playing with his pipe furiously)* I must not argue further. But why shouldn't the Socialist party be as scientific about people as it is about things? Psychology is quite as important as production for us.

MRS. MARTIN. Our intention is to provide homes for the homeless, work for the workless, hope for the hopeless, freedom from the bondage of debt, opportunity and abundance for all. Isn't that good psychology?

JENKINS. Excellent, Mrs. Martin, but why not put the emphasis on the homes, the work, the hope, and the abundance instead of "Economic Determinism," "Surplus Value," "Class Struggle" and "Co-operative Commonwealth?"

MUIR. Those jaw breakers don't mean a thing to most people.

MRS. ANDREWS. They do. Those are the principles by and through which our emancipation must come. We can't abandon them just because some one who doesn't understand becomes afraid.

JENKINS. Right. If a skipper made for harbour every time a passenger got afraid, he would never arrive at his destination. But, on the other hand, the captain doesn't need to discuss the fine points of navigation with the passengers.

WEST. I agree with Mr. Jenkins that fear and misunderstanding are the chief enemies of Socialism.

JENKINS. But if we strike the right note in our campaigning, it would be as hard to scare our people from better homes and prosperity as it would be to scare a hungry donkey from a load of hay.

MRS. MARTIN. Socialism offers the parents bread for their hungry children, homes for lovers who can't marry now, because they have no homes. That should be attractive.

JENKINS. Yes, in the same way that tired wings and empty crops should attract wild geese to the barn yard. But the fear of guns is often stronger than their desire for food and rest, so they don't alight.

MRS. ANDREWS. Well, let's get on. I'm tired of all these damned metaphors.

MRS. MARTIN. *(shocked)* Mrs. Andrews!

JENKINS. *(ignoring the attack)* How is it, Mrs. Andrews, that up till now either the Patriots or the Loyalists have always got the majority of votes?

MRS. ANDREWS. Because there's never before been a third party strong enough and determined enough for people to trust them. People are sick of being fed with gruel and apple sauce. Surely they know that all the Patriot and Loyalist promises are so much bunkum now, just as they have always been in the past.

MRS. MARTIN. I'm afraid you'll have to come to the rescue, Mr. McGregor, and settle this prolonged discussion.

McGREGOR. *(rousing from his reclining position and sitting erect in his chair with quiet composure and confidence)* This discussion is natural under the circumstances. Our opponents' propaganda is effective. The people are afraid. But as long as they are more afraid of Socialism than of hunger and suffering they are not ready for the new order.

WEST. But Bob, why are they afraid of Socialism? Think of the problem in the light of winning the election!

McGREGOR. There is a confusion of thought about what is meant by winning an election. An election is only a means of measuring real progress in political thought. Any device which might show progress to be greater than it really is, would be like a merchant tampering with the weights and measures.

JENKINS. I don't see that.

McGREGOR. If by a change in phraseology or through some spurious promise we increased our vote by three hundred thousand, that vote would not really be for Socialism.

WEST. One vote would be as good as another, wouldn't it?

McGREGOR. We want to win Socialism. The election is incidental. It is true that we cannot win Socialism without first winning the election. But it is just as true that we might win the election in such a way as to lose Socialism.

MUIR. Quite.

MRS. MARTIN. I agree with you entirely, Mr. McGregor.

McGREGOR. I cannot permit any modification of policy with a view to getting votes. To do so would be to yield the principle for which the votes are sought.

MRS. ANDREWS. Hear! Hear!

McGREGOR. Circumstances have committed to our care certain great principles of truth. What we say and what we do will be a mirror of that truth. We must not try to win the objective by unworthy means.

WEST. Can't we get elected, and then take care of those principles?

McGREGOR. The usual thing is to get elected and then proceed to forget the principles.

WEST. You mean, that's what the old parties do.

McGREGOR. Of course. We haven't had the chance yet as a government either to be false or true to principles.

WEST. Isn't it time enough to stick for principle when we are a government?

McGREGOR. This is the time to begin sticking.

JENKINS. It is not a matter of principle; it's purely one of political tactics.

McGREGOR. Principle must inhere in tactics as elsewhere. We are the guardians of this movement, which was here before we came and will be here when we are gone. Ours is a great responsibility.

JENKINS. Well, what is to be done?

McGREGOR. Those who follow old party tactics are following a hearse. We are the young of a new age. The heritage of all the past is in our hands. We must not mar it with lust of power, with foolish hate, or with spineless compromises.

WEST. I agree with you entirely, Bob, but I would fight fire with fire.

McGREGOR. That sounds like a party slogan. Did you ever try fighting fire with water?

(All laugh good humouredly.)

WEST. Oh, I guess you are really right, but, darn it, when someone deliberately kicks me on the shins, I want to forget about Queensberry rules!

McGREGOR. To forget is dangerous. For when you give up the rules and adopt your antagonist's tactics, you abandon your own skill and engage him on ground where he is master.

JENKINS. Please do not think I take issue with you in principle, but how are we to overcome the fears inspired by our opponents?

McGREGOR. Of course, we may use fear ourselves providing we inspire it by an appeal to facts. If we, as a nation, are to continue on the present course, there is plenty of reason for all of us to be afraid.

JENKINS. You admit, then, that fear may play an important part?

McGREGOR. Fear will and should play a part, but fear is negative. People who run in a panic to escape will have neither the patience nor the wisdom to construct a means of safety. It is better to have a following which is positively committed to the building of a new social order, than to be overwhelmed by a mob which is running in panic from the crashing structures of the old.

MRS. ANDREWS. I suggest that we close the discussion and that we notify all our workers to hew to the line and let the chips fall where they may.

McGREGOR. All agreed?

ALL. Agreed.

McGREGOR. Very good. I am sure that we are on the threshold of victory, and as I contemplate winning, the tremendous responsibility of it almost makes me afraid.

WEST. Afraid! Nothing! Let's win first and get scared about what will happen afterwards.

JENKINS. The people will expect immediate improvements, no doubt.

McGREGOR. The question is, will they have sufficient understanding to wait for the development of our plans?

WEST. It's a cinch they won't wait long!

McGREGOR. Well, we shall have to face that when we get there. *(taking memoranda from his desk)* Meantime, I want to go over some of the details of the business we did yesterday. Mr. Jenkins, has your group completed the final draft of the programme?

JENKINS. Yes, it's on the press.

McGREGOR. You understand that you are to take full responsibility for financing all literature.

JENKINS. I think I can manage that.

McGREGOR. Mrs. Martin, regarding the Dime Fund *(passing over memo)*, here are fuller details.

MRS. MARTIN. I've gone over the papers you gave me yesterday. I don't think we'll have trouble in getting the ten thousand.

McGREGOR. Dr. Muir, you have absolute control of the radio campaign.

MUIR. That's fine. And I'm glad to say I can stick it through, right up to election day.

McGREGOR. Mrs. Andrews, you are to take charge of our young people's organization. *(passing a memo)*

MRS. ANDREWS. *(with pleasure)* That's the sort of thing

I want to do.

McGREGOR. West, you take charge of the organization of constituencies. Here is a memo on that. Local committees and individuals will look after the details, of course; you advise and direct.

WEST. This sounds like a prime minister selecting his Cabinet.

McGREGOR. *(smiling)* The same principle, I suppose.

MUIR. Rather a Commander-in-chief giving orders to his officers before an attack.

McGREGOR. At any rate, our next meeting will be after the battle. Well, I'll see you later.

(They all rise. McGregor shakes hands and the Executive goes out, leaving him and Miss Wilton alone in the room. With a memo in his hand he goes over to the table where Miss Wilton is working. She looks up and smiles as he approaches.)

McGREGOR. Miss Wilton, I'm getting volunteer workers to do all this routine stuff that you're doing now. I want you to take charge of this office for me. Many matters you can look after yourself. If they can wait a few days I'll deal with them at week-ends. In very important cases you can phone me. West will help you.

MISS WILTON. That's a lot of responsibility, Mr. McGregor.

McGREGOR. There's more to come. I want you to take charge of our itinerant speakers. *(passing her the memo)* Here is the list of names, the dates available. There will be others to add to these as time goes on.

MISS WILTON. Do you think I can do it?

McGREGOR. *(with conviction)* I know you can. West will give you the list of the young men and women who are willing to help us do the routine work.

MISS WILTON. Are you going now?

McGREGOR. Yes.

MISS WILTON. It'll be strange seeing you only at week ends, Mr. McGregor. We all depend on you so much.

McGREGOR. No more than I depend on all of you.

MISS WILTON. Oh yes, there's a difference. Look at the Executive—I was listening to what you said to them—it just made new men and women of them.

McGREGOR. You're a loyal little soul, Minnie.

MISS WILTON. It's not just loyalty. You're so different.

I mean—*(looking at him with a queer smile)* I guess I can't make a speech. I've forgotten what I was going to say.

McGREGOR. That's not uncommon. We all do that at times. Now Minnie, there's a man coming here to see me. He insists on privacy, and as we have no other office . . .

MISS WILTON. Surely, I'll go out. I want to do some shopping anyway.

(Mr. Bill Higgins enters. He has the jovial optimism of an expert salesman, and exudes the go-getter spirit. He eyes Miss Wilton in a familiar manner. He is about forty years of age, is dressed in a light gray suit and carries a little handbag.)

HIGGINS. Good morning, McGregor. Nice place you've got here. *(then, looking around at the poorly furnished office)* I mean, for the job, you know.

McGREGOR. *(rising and extending his hand)* Well, it's a place, anyhow.

(Miss Wilton goes out.)

McGREGOR. Mr. Higgins, is it?

HIGGINS. Why, of course. Higgins. Bill Higgins. I've heard you speaking at meetings and over the radio; seen your photos in the papers often; national figure, you know.

McGREGOR. *(pointing to a chair)* Take a seat.

(They both sit down, Higgins on the right of McGregor.)

McGREGOR. Now, what can I do for you?

(Higgins appears a little abashed and seems at a loss to know just how to begin.)

HIGGINS. Oh, well, I just dropped in, you know. How goes the battle?

McGREGOR. Splendidly.

HIGGINS. Indeed. How are your finances in the campaign? Very important matter, finance, in any undertaking of this sort.

McGREGOR. Oh, we're getting along. Of course, we have no millionaires supporting us, you know.

HIGGINS. Why not? I see you have a dime fund on the go. Ten thousand dollars is what you expect as the maximum?

McGREGOR. Yes.

HIGGINS. That's nothing, Mr. McGregor. Just nothing in a campaign like this. Why, you need a quarter of a million at the very least. In fact, you should have a whole

million.

McGREGOR. *(laughing aloud)* I disagree with you. We don't need extravagant amounts of money. If we paid all our workers, it would take an enormous amount, but most of our campaigning is done voluntarily. So you see, you can't measure our effectiveness by our bank account.

HIGGINS. *(rather taken aback but realizing that he can't stop now)* Hmmm, well, Mr. McGregor, I am in a position to let you have all the financial assistance you require.

McGREGOR. *(with great surprise)* That's interesting.

HIGGINS. And, I might as well come out with it, I'm commissioned to ask you to consider acceptance of the portfolio of the Minister of Finance in the next government under the Premiership of Middleton.

McGREGOR. *(flushes as if anger is going to master him, then, after a moment, looks as if he saw right through Higgins)* Is this a practical joke?.

HIGGINS. *(incredulously)* Joke? *(laughing out loud and slapping McGregor on the shoulder)* Why man, it's the opportunity of a lifetime! *(in confidential tones)* Middleton has a great admiration for you, and feels that you are the only man for the job.

McGREGOR *(rising)* Excuse me. I have no time to discuss absurd proposals. Moreover, regardless of your intentions, I consider such an offer an insult.

HIGGINS. Insult? Insult to be offered one of the highest positions of honour and service in the gift of the nation? Why, there isn't a man in the country who wouldn't be proud to—

McGREGOR. *(moving as if to open the door)* I don't want to be discourteous even to a man who has insulted me, but—

HIGGINS. *(opening his bag)* I'll show you my authority . . . right from Mr. Middleton, himself.

(He rummages in his bag for a paper.)

McGREGOR. *(in an authoritative voice)* Go back and tell tell those who sent you here that I am not for sale; that I am in this fight to wrest political and economic power from the hands of a few ignorant and selfish individuals; tell your masters, whoever they are, that there is no power on earth or in Hell that will turn me from that purpose; tell them I can't be bought with money, position, power or glory. The glory I seek is that of a healthy and happy people. To be among them as a human being is the posi-

tion I want; the power I want is the power to banish for ever hunger, poverty and idleness, tell them—Ah! What's the use? Those who sent you on this mission are incapable of understanding anything except their own mean ambitions.

HIGGINS. Mr. McGregor—be reasonable—You can't win! I tell you they won't allow you to win. Take my advice and get on the inside. You'll do more good there.

(McGregor has opened the door and is holding it for the convenient departure of Higgins, with a look which indicates that the discussion is closed.)

MCGREGOR. *(coldly)* Good morning, Mr. Higgins.

(Higgins half backs out, keeping his eye on McGregor as if he expected physical violence.)

CURTAIN

ACT II.

SCENE 2.

TIME: ONE WEEK LATER.

An afternoon meeting of the "Ladies of the Churches" in a private home in Saskatchewan. The room is large—one that is used, evidently as a combined dining-room and sitting-room. Sideboard, dining table and dining-room chairs are at one end of the room; a davenport, two easy chairs and piano at the other. There are several enlarged photographs of the family's ancestors on the walls, as well as one of wild horses and a copy of "My Creed" issued by the Department of Commerce some years previously. About twenty women are seated around the room.

The curtain rises just as the opening proceedings have been completed. The President, who is a little woman, rather sickly looking and without any marks of intellectuality or strength of character, is in the act of signing the minutes. All are talking at the same time in a low voice. Above the hum of subdued general conversation the remarks of a conversational group composed of Miss Green, Mrs. Albert Ferris, Mrs. Henry Thomas and Mrs. John Doughty are audible.

MISS GREEN. *(A young woman about thirty, tall, scraggy*

and old-maidish, is talking in an excited manner) The Patriot candidate talked most of the time about a crow's nest. Now what has a crow's nest to do with government? Yes, and he was opposed to destroying the crow's nest, and said that the Loyalists were pledged to smash the egg that was in it.

(Mrs. Doughty covers her face to hide a laugh.)

MRS. THOMAS. Gracious me! To break a crow's egg would seem the right thing to do. Crows are a pest.

MISS GREEN. That's exactly what I said to Mrs. Smith, who sat next to me at the meeting.

MRS. FERRIS. *(with a very placid and contented countenance and looking as if she believed that the best way to get more was to take what you could get when you could get it and ask no questions.)* Well, my dear, all that I can say is that my father was a great supporter of the Patriots. Of course, women didn't vote in my mother's day, so she was not interested, but I feel sure that if the Patriots want to protect crows' nests that it's the proper thing to do. You know, my dear, that crows kill and eat other pests, and very likely that is why he wanted to save the crows' nest so that there might be more crows to kill more pests,—that's something to vote for.

MISS GREEN. Why, I never thought of it in that way. Still, I believe the crows should be destroyed. Of course, you see, I am a Loyalist—tee, hee!

MRS. FERRIS. I wasn't at the meeting last night; I never go to political meetings. I know how I'm going to vote without anyone telling me. Those people who have to go to meetings before they know how they are going to vote are funny. Why don't they make up their minds, the same as I did, and stick to it.

MISS GREEN. *(with a repugnant shrug)* They say the Socialists are going to nationalize the women.

MRS. DOUGHTY. *(a trim little woman who has the appearance of having done hard physical work and who is impatient with the conversation)* That's not true, of course, though sometimes I almost think it's a pity they don't socialize them.

MISS GREEN. *(shocked)* What a horrible thing to say, Mrs. Doughty!

MRS. DOUGHTY. Well, it might give an opportunity to some who'd never get it any other way.

(This remark goes over Miss Green's head.)

MRS. FERRIS. Whatever happens, we must go out and beat Dicktorson and hard times.

MRS. DOUGHTY. Merely beating Dicktorson, or beating anyone else, won't stop hard times. It requires some sort of constructive policy to do that, and the Patriots haven't any.

(The noise of all the talking grows louder.)

MRS. THOMAS. *(matronly, stout and emphatic)* For my part, I have all I can do at home, without bothering with politics. I vote the way my husband does. But I do think the Prime Minister is a dear. I saw him once at a reception, and do you know what he did? He came up to me,—I had little Florrie in my arms; she was just a year old then,—my, how time flies! Well, my dear, he came up to me and said, "The hand that rules the cradle rocks the world." Beautiful, wasn't it?

MRS. FERRIS. Yes.

MRS. THOMAS. And then he kissed the baby.

MISS GREEN. Did he kiss only the baby?

MRS. THOMAS. Oh, my dear! It was broad daylight!

(At this point, attention is drawn to the President who is compelled to raise her voice in conversation with the Secretary.)

PRESIDENT. But the stories that are going around about the Socialist leader are terrible!

(All look toward the President and cease talking.)

SECRETARY. *(in half whisper)* What did he do? I haven't heard.

PRESIDENT. *(Whispers in Secretary's ear.)*

SECRETARY. What happened then?

PRESIDENT. *(with a knowing look)* We'll leave that to the imagination.

SECRETARY. *(giggles, and whispers to the woman next to her, who in turn whispers to the next, and so on.)*

PRESIDENT. *(rising)* Order, ladies. I fear that some of you are talking politics. Don't forget that this is a non-political organization. Just the same, if the stories that are going around are true, we should go out, each and every one, and vote against the Loyalists and the Socialists. *(Some nod their heads.)* But as I was saying, we must not mix politics with our religion. *(in a business tone)* We'll have the report of the Social Committee, please.

MRS. DOUGHTY. *(rising hastily to her feet)* Madam President, perhaps if we are not to be allowed to put a little politics into our religion it might not be a bad idea to put a little religion into our politics.

(A number nod approval.)

MRS. THOMAS. *(breakng in)* What do you mean?

MRS. DOUGHTY. *(ignoring the question)* It's sheer hypocrisy to talk about keeping this organization out of politics. Every woman in this room has been talking politics for the last half hour, and judging from the story just told by you, Madam President, and whispered down the line, we have been taking part in the rottenest kind of politics.

PRESIDENT. *(hammering the gavel on the table)* Mrs. Doughty,—you are out of order. How dare you say such things! I can't allow such remarks!

MRS. DOUGHTY. *(paying no attention to the President's interruption)* And then, after having used ourselves as carriers of a story which maligns a public man without a shred of evidence to support it, you, Madam President, advise us to vote for the Patriots.

MRS. ORMOND. *(an elderly women who now joins the discussidn)* And then tell us to keep out of politics!

PRESIDENT. *(almost in tears)* Mrs. Doughty, you will destroy this organization! I command you to stop!

(Mrs. Doughty sits down. Several woman are on their feet, addressing the chair at the same time. Mrs. Ormond gets the floor.)

MRS. ORMOND. Madam President, no doubt you meant well, and I make no insinuations, but if what Mrs. Doughty has said will destroy our organization, then the organization has no business to be alive.

ANOTHER WOMAN. Madam President, if our organization can stand the story you just repeated, it can survive anything.

PRESIDENT. *(again hammering on the table until the gavel-head falls off, while several women are trying to get the floor at the same time,—shouts)* I command Mrs. Doughty to apologize or leave the room!

MRS. DOUGHTY. *(above the uproar in which nearly every woman in the room is on her feet trying to get the floor)* I shall do neither!

CURTAIN

ACT III.

SCENE. 1.

TIME. THREE WEEKS LATER, NINE-THIRTY A.M.

Socialist headquarters. West is seated at an improvised table, to the left in front of the desk. The table is made of three boards twelve feet long, supported by crossing two-by-fours. West is busy checking up the voters' list of the local riding. Two young men are assisting him. A girl is taking shorthand notes to Mrs. Andrews' dictation. Miss Wilton's chair by the typewriter is vacant.

MRS. ANDREWS. Make these young people see that this is their big chance to serve their country. Four or five years from now it may well be too late. The changes which could now be brought about by peaceful means—

WEST. *(looking across at her)* What's that I hear you saying about peaceful means, Mrs. Andrews? I never felt more like knocking a few heads together in my life.

MRS. ANDREWS. Was I disturbing you? I'm sorry.

WEST. Oh, it's not you. It's these voters' lists.

(Enter Mrs. Martin. She and Mrs. Andrews exchange "good mornings", and Mrs. Andrews finishes her dictating SOTTO VOCE.*)*

MRS. MARTIN. *(to West)* He brought in a report on the Dime Fund. I have to address a women's luncheon so I can't stay. My poor family will hardly recognize me by the time this is over.

WEST. Oh, well, this doesn't happen every year.

MRS. MARTIN. Thank Heaven for that!

(McGregor enters.)

MCGREGOR. Good morning, Jack. Good morning, Mrs. Martin *(hangs up his hat and goes to his desk)* Things are going splendidly aren't they? *(sitting down)* We had reports yesterday from every riding. Optimism everywhere. Makes me feel great.

WEST. You haven't seen all the voters' lists?

MCGREGOR. I haven't seen any of them.

WEST. You can still afford to be optimistic.

MCGREGOR. Why? What's wrong.

WEST. The usual thing—hundreds left off that should be

on, and hundreds on that should be off.

McGREGOR. Oh, well, that's to be expected.

MRS. MARTIN. Here's this report you wanted, Mr. McGregor.

McGREGOR. Thanks. And there are a couple of letters for you, *(glancing around)* Where's Miss Wilton?

WEST. *(nonchalantly)* Dunno.

McGREGOR. Hasn't she been here this morning?

WEST. Nope.

McGREGOR. *(reaching for the telephone)* I hope she isn't sick. We were working very late last night—she seemed a little quiet. *(dials a number.)*

WEST. *(beginning on a new list)* There's no answer. I've phoned twice.

MRS. ANDREWS. That's all, thank you, Miss Washburn. Try and get those off for me this morning will you?

(She crosses to talk to Mrs. Martin.)

McGREGOR. *(with receiver at his ear)* No answer. *(hanging up the receiver.)* There's a fine girl, West.

I'm going to slip across to the telegraph office for a moment.

WEST. Okey Doke.

(Goes out.)

(West works away checking names and humming, as usual. Mrs. Andrews and Mrs. Martin talk. Miss Washburn types. The faint call of a newsboy may be heard indistinctly. A moment later the call becomes clear. "Extra! All about the . . . " (Here the words become indistinct. West stops humming and listens.) Then quite audibly, "Extra. Socialist leader charged." West drops his work and goes to door, and as he opens, "All about the sea-duction. Socialist leader charged with sea-duction by his secretary!"

WEST. *(shouting)* Here, boy!

BOY. *(off stage)* All about the sea-duction!

WEST. Give me a paper. *(Snatches a paper; shuts door; reads to himself a moment. Mrs. Martin and Mrs. Andrews come up at either side.)* Well I'll be damned!

MRS. MARTIN. *(looking at paper)* Oh, how terrible!

MRS. ANDREWS. People make me sick! Especially newspaper people! Muck-rakers, all of them.

(They share the paper. Miss Washburn peers over their shoulders.)

MISS WASHBURN. I don't believe a word of this trash.

I can't understand Minnie. She seemed such a sensible girl.

MRS. MARTIN. Do you know, Miss Washburn, I think it would be better if the volunteer workers were excused this morning? It's all very painful, and—

MRS. ANDREWS. There'll be things to discuss in connection with this charge.

MISS WASHBURN. O.K. I'll shuffle them along.

(She lifts her hat and bag, collects West's assistants and shepherds them out quietly.)

MRS. MARTIN. This is a terrible blow. We had all believed so in Mr. McGregor.

MRS ANDREWS. No use crying over spilt milk. The thing is to decide what to do.

MRS. MARTIN. Whatever shall I say at luncheon?

WEST. Lord knows! The town'll be buzzing with it!

MRS. MARTIN. I must go now and pack. I'll telephone you.

(she goes out.)

MRS. ANDREWS. I'm going to flunk it, too. Just let us all know what we're to do, Mr. West—if you think there's anything that's worth trying at this stage.

WEST. When I think of the way we all trusted that, that—

MRS. ANDREWS. I know, it's heartbreaking isn't it?

(Enter McGregor.)

(West, without looking in McGregor's direction, hands him the paper, sits down slowly at his improvised table, with his back to McGregor, and stares straight into space. McGregor, reading the headlines, utters a groan as if he had been felled by a blow in the dark, and sags perceptibly in his chair. A long silence ensues. West slowly turns his head sideways and squints to look at McGregor, who is still mentally staggered under the impact. McGregor slowly drops the paper on the desk but does not speak.)

MCGREGOR. *(in a quiet, dead voice)* West, surely you don't believe this thing?

(West looks away and does not answer.)

MCGREGOR. *(with a calm in his voice that is fearful)* West? Do you believe it?

WEST. *(turning to look at his leader, and with impassioned voice)* My God, Bob, I don't know what to believe! *(Then, seeing the hopeless agony which McGregor is suffering, extends his hand.)* No! I don't believe it.

McGREGOR. *(ignoring the extended hand)* Jack, you know, or should know, that if I had been guilty I would admit it

WEST. *(with evident contrition and conviction)* Bob, please forgive me. *(extending his hand again).*

(McGregor takes his hand in a firm and silent clasp which speaks volumes for their deep understanding.)

McGREGOR. Thanks, Jack. I suppose it *is* hard to believe in my innocence.

WEST. You think the people will believe this scandal?

McGREGOR. They can't help believing it. Why even you had doubts.

WEST. They'll stampede?

McGREGOR. Yes, and in their desire to destroy me, they will punish themselves—that's the real tragedy.

(McGregor continues to pace the floor, lights a cigarette. West pre-occupied moves things on the desk.)

WEST. Anyhow, Bob, you have the consolation of knowing that you are innocent. It's better to be the victim of this thing than the liar and cheat who's framed you.

McGREGOR. Innocence is cold comfort for the wreck of a great opportunity—Yes, the end of a life's ambition.

WEST. Mark my words, Bob, the Patriots are at the bottom of this You'll see!

McGREGOR. Undoubtedly, but who's going to recognize that? Disproving a charge of this sort is almost impossible.

WEST. I have an idea that it will look pretty thin to a judge and jury. It's fine political strategy for them, but you'll disprove it.

McGREGOR. Perhaps. But the election will be over by that time and we shall have lost. Besides the Patriot Party will pack the jury. And even if I'm cleared of the charge, there are thousands who'll still believe me guilty.

WEST. Things are coming to a pretty pass if a man can have his character and life work destroyed by the false charge of some woman, without even enough evidence to create a healthy suspicion.

McGREGOR. We might as well face the facts. But Minnie Wilton—Jack, I can't see how a girl of her sort could be a party to such a conspiracy.

WEST. Well damn her! *(pointing to the newspaper)* She did it.

McGREGOR. I can't understand it. She has blasted her own character with this, you know, as well as mine. And it isn't as though she needed the money.

WEST. Ah! She was a plant. Her story of an independent income was all the bunk. And we fell for it like the suckers we are.

McGREGOR. I can't believe that. Such treachery is incredible.

WEST. Likely she'll get enough out of this, though, to make her independent from now on. Now about this charge. We'll have to get hold of her and make her withdraw it.

McGREGOR. Do you think the men who engineered this have laid their plans as badly as that? No, we won't see Minnie Wilton again until after the election and then it will be too late.

WEST. But you'll deny it, anyway?

McGREGOR. Of course, and every word I say will be taken as a further proof of my guilt.

(Phone rings.)

WEST. *(grasping the receiver, before McGregor could reach it)* Yes—From Vancouver—for Mr. McGregor—"Keep stiff upper lip, I don't believe this story. It's a conspiracy of Patriots. Moya." Did you get that Bob?

McGREGOR. Yes, thanks, Jack.

CURTAIN

ACT III.

SCENE 2.

(Socialist headquarters. A number of men have gathered to hear the final election results. McGregor, with hair perceptibly whiter, and a worn-out, haggard look, sits at the end of the improvised table of the previous scene. West is busy answering the phone and noting election results on a pad. The men sit or lounge against the wall, smoking. An air of dejection and defeat pervades the place. Phone rings.)

WEST. Quebec: Patriots—48. Looks like a pretty clean

sweep, eh? Oh, well—*(hangs up).*

ALL. *(crowding around)* Oh, what was it? Quebec, did you say? 48? What about B.C., etc.?

WEST. Hold your horses, now! The final returns should be in anytime.

ALL. *(more buzz in conversation.)*

WEST. *(above din to McGregor)* It's a landslide, Bob.

MCGREGOR. What did you expect? *(telephone rings.)*

WEST. *(answering)* What?—Oh yes. Don't bother about the provinces. Just give me the Dominion figures. Fifty Loyalists—forty Socialists—one hundred and fifty-five Patriots. *(hangs up).*

(group becomes silent.)

MCGREGOR. Well, men, we're beaten. The people are beaten.

ALL. *(murmurs, confusion)* Hard lines, better luck next time. That blasted woman, etc.

MCGREGOR. I want you all to know how much I've appreciated your support, your loyalty.

ALL. That's all right. It's a shame, etc. *(the crowd is milling around, when Miss Wilton's voice is heard off stage.)*

MISS WILTON. Where's Mr. McGregor? I tell you I must see him. *(She bursts in, and pushes her way forward to McGregor)* Mr. McGregor, I didn't do that awful thing. I didn't do it! They grabbed me and threw me in a car. They took me to a house and made me sign a paper. I didn't know what was on it. I didn't realize. I just got away through a window and came straight here.

MCGREGOR. West, get rid of these people. Sit down, Miss Wilton.

MISS WILTON. I must explain. It seems so awful. If I'd realized—but my mother and sisters were hungry. I needed money so badly—and—Mr. Jarvis offered me enough to keep us all for the rest of our lives.

MCGREGOR. Hunger! The universal urge.

MISS WILTON. I didn't know you—I thought you'd be some beastly agitator. Mr. Jarvis told me it was my duty to my country to help put you out.

WEST. So it *was* Jarvis, was it?

MCGREGOR. Quiet, West.

MISS WILTON. Then when I met you and found out what you were really like, I couldn't go on with it. I felt awful. But he wouldn't let me leave. He said he'd tell you. I couldn't stand that. Oh, I've ruined everything! *(She col-*

lapses into a chair.)

McGREGOR. Don't cry, you didn't think.

WEST. Nobody does in this blasted country. That's the trouble.

MISS WILTON. *(low)* I'd give my life if I could undo this.

McGREGOR. That isn't the way people can give their lives.

MISS WILTON. I'll tell the papers everything. I won't spare myself.

WEST. That's an idea. We'll show up that man Jarvis.

McGREGOR. Jarvis wasn't at the bottom of this, West. What's an election to him? No, it's the man behind Jarvis you want to get and can't.

WEST. If we only knew—

McGREGOR. As for knowing—it was probably Sir John Horn—Braymore, perhaps, or Hogg—Hogg and Crust—yes, I think most certainly those two.

WEST. Well, then, can't we—

McGREGOR. Knowing, I said, Jack. It's a difficult matter to prove anything.

WEST. Anyway, next time we'll be on our guard. People will know better next time.

McGREGOR. If there ever is a next time.

MISS WILTON. *(looking up)* Oh—what do you mean?

McGREGOR. The people are weak and foolish, but Horn and his ilk can't keep them in blindness forever. They're easily frightened, easily swayed, bullied, cajoled, exploited, until the hour strikes.

MISS WILTON. The hour?

McGREGOR. The hour of desperation, when men's burdens are so heavy that they would rather risk death than carry them a moment longer. It struck in France in 1789; in Russia . . .

WEST. Canadians won't tackle anything unconstitutional!

McGREGOR. Have you ever seen a panic at a fire, or a shipwreck? There are codes, but there's a time when people forget them. There's a law, but people can be driven beyond it. Then we have not reform but revolution.

MISS WILTON. But I thought you wanted revolution.

McGREGOR. Not that kind. I wanted to build up, not tear down— build a newer and better social order. Well, I've failed. Someone else will succeed. Even if it comes through bloodshed, it's coming. It's bound to come.

(Shouting in the distance.)

WEST. And in the meantime—

MCGREGOR. Listen—*(shouting nearer)* Hurrah for Middleton. Get on the band-wagon. Middleton, the People's Champion!

MCGREGOR. The People's Champion! *(He goes slowly back to the table and begins to gather up papers as curtain falls.)*

CURTAIN

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